

MEETING REPORT NO. 19

PROJECT: **Town of Needham Downtown Study**

DATE: 11 July 2007

LOCATION: Needham Public Library

PRESENT: Downtown Study Committee (DSC)

Kate Fitzpatrick	Town Manager
Jack Cogswell	Board of Selectmen
Jerry Wasserman	Chairman, Board of Selectmen
Bob Smart	Cochair, DSC Committee
Moe Handel	Cochair, Planning Board
Lee Newman	Planning Director
Mark Gluesing	Design Review Board
John Edgar	Economic Development Advisory Committee
Jeanne McKnight	Planning Board & League of Women Voters

DiNisco Design Partnership (DDP)

Kenneth DiNisco
Jon Oxman

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of this meeting was to review the results of the second Community Workshop (06/25/07). See Meeting Report #18 for documentation of the workshop procedure.

2. COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO CONCEPT PLAN

- 2.1. Community response to the Concept Plan presented at the second Community Workshop was evaluated based on tabulation of completed questionnaires, review of Small Group Discussion flip charts and observations by DSC members. Overall, the community response was generally supportive of the Concept Plan.
- 2.2. Questionnaire Tabulation – 22 questionnaires were returned and the responses tabulated. All questions had a majority of responses in support of the Concept Plan and most questions had a significantly larger percentage in support. See the attached Summary. ***Postscript: Five additional completed questionnaires were given to DDP at the meeting. The attached Summary has been revised to include these.***
- 2.3. Small Group Discussion Flip Charts – A synopsis of comments from the Small Group Discussion flip charts was handed out. Comments were consistent with the tabulated summary of the completed questionnaires. See attached synopsis and compilation of flip charts.

- 2.4. Participant Comments – See attached compilation of additional comments from participants included with their completed questionnaires. This compilation also includes letters sent to the Planning Department commenting on the Downtown Study.
3. MEETING WITH TRANSIT REALTY ASSOCIATES (TRA)
- 3.1. Ken DiNisco and Jon Oxman met on 06/27/07 with representatives of TRA, who represents the MBTA on their real estate development projects. The purpose of this meeting was to coordinate the Downtown Study and MBTA planning.
- 3.2. The MBTA's commitment to promote Transit Oriented Development opportunities dovetails with goals of the Downtown Study.
4. NEXT STEPS
- 4.1. Further Discussion and Consensus on the Concept Plan with a larger representation of the DSC.
- 4.2. Build-Out, Parking and Traffic Analysis of Concept Plan.
- 4.3. DDP to evaluate consolidation of existing off-street parking.
5. NEXT MEETINGS
- 5.1. The DSC will meet in the evening on Wednesday 08 August 2007. Location and time TBD.

The discussions of this meeting are recorded as understood by the writer. Please advise the writer of any omissions or corrections.



Jon Oxman AIA
DiNISCO DESIGN

JAO/ jc

cc: DSC
Kenneth DiNisco
Richard Rice

Enclosure: 1. Handout: Questionnaire Tabulation Summary (07/12/07).
2. Handout: Small Group Discussion – Flip Chart Synopsis (07/11/07).
3. Compilation: Questionnaire Comments from Workshop #2 Participants & Letters Received by Planning Department (07/11/07).
4. Compilation: Small Group Discussion Flip Charts (07/11/07).

GROUP 1

Group 1, Pg 1

- ① Losing air + light on both sides
ex. Chapel - might feel corridor like
"visual openness"

- narrow some streets (< pkg)
widen sidewalks

- One way to control traffic?

Streets already claustrophobic

Narrow roads AND raise height makes worse

Footage from 1 bldg edge to other

What is need if not hsg need?

- Is need aff. hsg.

Get more people there - height good

Need nightlife - sidewalks

- young couples, baby boomers

No Boxy Bldgs - Make them appealing

Too high near Res. → 2½?

Group 1, Pt 2

(B)

Center

w/ attention to details
- sidewalks, streetscape

No Big Box unless pretty
depends on what's inside
(Mix high end + aff. hsg)
retail + office to supp. aff. hsg)
if sidewalks were widened
get new residents = tax \$
↳ mkt towards younger?

inclusionary zoning

Chestnut "Absolutely"

Destination retail (current)

↳ you don't want to walk

Curb cut + sidewalk improvements
↳ continuous pkg lots

Hospital will bring in people

More housing

Solid wall anywhere but
pkg in back not front

hsg amenities: wider sidewalks, landscaping
spaces b/t bldgs (parks, access to pks) - yes + no
Places to sit

Community Workshop #2 (06/25/07) Flip Charts
Group 1, Page 3

(C) Above or Below Ground? Group 1, Pg 3

ex. Chestnut St. 101 - go under not above

- ① AG - depending on where & how
"invisible"
as long as architecturally desirable
BG - traffic flow important

- ② how much? - depends on magnitude
charge fee for parking
if tax base increases,
if redevelopment can increase
could be employee or bsg parking

- ③ ~~NAME~~ P2 - employees
P4 - largest, hidden
might be problematic CVS (30m limit)
P6 - medical future
P5 - remote but good for
block redevelopment
~~NAME~~
P1E - egress issue
invisible

Community Workshop #2 (06/25/07) Flip Charts
Group 1, Page 4

Group 1, Pg 4

①

④ X30

②

a) 10000 ft by right
higher by special permit

b) 15000-20000 ft by right
Others by special permit/trade offs

NOT ON GARDEN ST. SECTION
↳ avoid turning it into Needham St.
improve ped. environment

c) somewhere 1/4
above recommendations

Group 2, Pg 1

Group 2

QUESTION A:

1) 4 stories too high

would prefer 2 + 1 but... would
this be economical?

3 + 1 would be our max limit

want strong design standards

prefer staggered heights, if

don't want all looking possible

the same (height or design)

maybe lower near town hall &

graduating to higher away

2) YES

Group 2, Pt 2

QUESTION B:

1. No ... would overshadow
Town Hall

we like the concept of housing
w/in downtown area but not
nec. over retail side x side?

wants regulations to permit this
need moderate + mixed housing
not \$\$\$ MILLION

2. YES

Group 2, Pg 3

QUESTION C:

1. Yes...but maybe smaller lots
in ea district rather than ² 16 lot
or pkg structure

would prefer a pkg structure that
doesn't front on street

2. yes, but

3. P-1 1st choice

want something creative - over
tracks, maybe

P-6 medical use lot

P-5 retail

Group 2, Pg 4

Question E:

1. people already do that...
but does hurt retail

more important would be
variety of retail in town
not ^{only} banks/nail salons/dry cleaners/etc

2. no to raised intersections
prefer "imprint"—chg of texture
in pavement

need to look at traffic patterns
don't want to lose 4 lanes where
they are, but ... want to
improve pedestrian safety

Signs on Great Plain need to
be upgraded + coordinated

What about L turn from Chapel
onto Great Plain?

Need crosswalks on Chapel ^{+ Highland} at
Walgreens ← Town Hall → Bagels Best

Community Workshop #2 (06/25/07) Flip Charts
Group 3, Page 1

GROUP 3, Pg 1

A) Urban Design - Height & Massing

- encourage loosening of height restrictions
- concerned about economics of ~~the~~ housing in downtown
- doesn't see demand for spilling 2 stories plus
- need to go up ~~if~~ if can't go out
- height is not a concern if architecture and greening is well done
- need to reduce reliance on fossil fuel & develop mass transit
- Keep height to 2 stories - maintain sidewalks, etc
 - go to 3+ max
- concerned about losing sense of NE town by going up too high
- ~~the~~ height is not a problem as long as architecture is done attractively
- use landscape to maintain village environment
- not allow on street parking overnight
- Need him needs growth - hopefully encourage environment where people will walk more, etc

Community Workshop #2 (06/25/07) Flip Charts
Group 3, Page 2

B) Land Use - Upper Story Housing and Office

GROUP 3, PG 2

- thinks train station is a negative for people considering buying a house / condos in that area
- concern about ~~the~~ how much demand there is for office space
- should keep 2 1/2 zoning in center
- not sure there is a demand for market rate housing in center
- concerned about how hospital will expand
- does not want housing in Ctr to price itself out of market
- ~~there~~
- who are we marketing to? elderly, newley weds,
- town needs to make statement about growth, mixed use, vibrancy, etc

GROUP 3, PG 3

c) ~~Parking~~ Parking Structure

Structured parking - no town funding

(6) Agree ~~Disagree~~

Structured parking - w/ town funding
Agree or Disagree

P-1 + + + +

P-2 |

P-3 | | | |

P-4

P-5

P-6 |

P-7 | | |

If have structured
parking, then get rid
of on street parking.

Concerns about security
and maintenance.

- Fire Station - |

- ~~Study~~ Study impact of Shared parking

Community Workshop #2 (06/25/07) Flip Charts
Group 3, Page 4

F) Streetscape - Pedestrian

GROUP 3, PG 4

Balance traffic flow w/ ability of
pedestrians to cross street safely

Owners need to be responsible for snow removal,
maintenance, etc.

More trees - less curb cuts

Commercial businesses need to maintain
sidewalks, lighting, cleanliness.

Recycling bins

Group 4, Pg 1

1. CONCERNS

- Canyonization/openness
- Need for density
- Light? Skyscape
- Sidewalk +
- * - Transition to Residential
- Need to educate public
- Current Conditions are justifying

Design Important

Group 4, Pt 2

Doesn't
want
app + \$69.

media!

Chestnut

Shades
Design

Traffic
Cannon

3+1

Housing + Office above
Limited \$ OK

Conceptually mixed reaction
Economics?

Some market

Yes with reservations
and by location

Can be done w/ 3

Mixed OK but
height is a concern

Use by site

Limited (service)

Community Workshop #2 (06/25/07) Flip Charts
Group 4, Page 3

Darking
1. Underground

Group 4, PF3

2. Greene's Field

3. Walgreens

P 1-3

Local vs. Natl. Group 4, Pt 4

Survival rates of
Size Stores

Space opportunities
differ by district
Downtown not conducive
to chains

Keep current
building floor plates.

Large retail
DT - no
chestnut split

Group 4, Pt 5

* Height & Density:

Like height but not $3\frac{1}{2}$ - too much

Excited, good, good grade.

Old $2+1$ // $3+1$ too high, anyone

Increase. Develop. Put y. over Jan. 1. undefined
paving the way. - street on fairly wide.

3 or step back - Old location 40' x 40'

Sm - 3 stories

* Comm. - San Antonio - 3 stories work.
Shadows. - not more.

$2\frac{1}{2}$ is good.

Product - Susan Abbott. - $2\frac{1}{2}$ - 3. Keep area of town
Parks. open. - Need more focus on back street.

Susan Mc Bury - keep not like the pic.

* Drugg. - wide sidewalks - but not what we are
guy' d for. - 3 stories too much.

More - maybe on wider sidewalks. ~~3rd~~

Mr. Piked. - skyscraper is the answer.

* No skyscraper is now diff. Maybe - ~~Charles~~ C.P.

Sidewalks matter. - A little $3+1$

Conf. - residents till near by.

Wound y flow y traffic

Don - Skel. - 3 stories - four public
sections.

Way for people can be designed. but expensive.

Group 4, Pt 6



~~Very abstract~~

- ★ ~~Wider side walks, more heights.~~
~~What about spilly daylight?~~
- ★ ~~Confidence with spilly daylight.~~
3 stories require ~~stairs~~ on elevator. ^{incumbent}
- ★ 3 max - what a range of heights.
- ★ - 3+1 Design Standard.

Dissent:

- A dissent -

Process with similar for neighborhood.

What if upper stories ~~interior~~ being interior spaces.

Double or Christ St.

~~stacked mixed use~~
"Stacked Mixed Use"

- B. - ~~What about?~~ 3+1 required for daylight.
- ★ - Do we want office or residential above the first floor?

3+1 or. - All residential good. - Affordable urban good thing good in center. - What is needed to make it

★ Impr. New streetscape important.

Not feasible?

Susan A. A few limited number.

Sam McG. - Is stack feasible? too expensive?

like people in center.

Mr. Sokol. - maybe high end store. like it

Bm. likes idea. - Business below, + high end.

Jobs will work. - ~~he~~

Daylight - Walking my hexagon.

Community Workshop #2 (06/25/07) Flip Charts
Group 4, Page 7

Group 4, Pt 7

Deferred discussion - Would you like a story to get mixed use?

B1. Q. - To get mixed use. Will you go to 3.1?

Add
Dak b
to mid
use.

Mixed use. - 3 story rpl. undermths.

here. - Need more density to get the mixed use?

Do you care for much.

Variety by location? y/a. = Design Review

Will require high end shops? - High price
outlets.

What about residences next door.

Don't like high buildings. - Limit the number of these.

Want a service oriented town vs. elite stores.

Want locally owned businesses / cobblers.

Location very important. Not everywhere.

Mr. Sokol. - Yes yes, but ~~there~~ low cost
housing.

Mr. Sokol. - Major change.

B2. Christy about better for hospital

Q.R. for medical expansion?

Sokol. - yes Christy at.

Susan M.C.

Susan A. - agreed. - Shodor.

Design is the key to success!

Broken down into
- ~~friction~~ OK but

way

Medical use - lots of jobs & traffic
OK part of undermths.

Group 4, Pg 8

Q - The availability of pub is a factor.

Development will be aided by the pub structure. - espec. all day pubes.

- 1) If town didn't build the structure?
- 2) If town funds required.
- 3) If prep work - any other?

structured
Q - Do we need ~~structure~~ pub? Any proposed mkt. zone.

Sokki - put public basement - underground.

M.S. - What involved at Ben's Field. (\$50-50,000 per year)

Susan D. - Willgreen fund plan for structure.

Amgen
4-2, 4-5, on
about 100.

Willgreen as asset.

Local ~~committee~~ coordinate public pub.

P-1,2,3 = structure acceptable

Some structure is more places use.

* Using public ~~fund~~ & private funds. =

Espe. current town pub lot: (P4)

(P2) Willgreen

And some in legend.

* Some ^{town} coordinate what ~~will~~ have non exist.

Group 4, Pg 9

D Land Use in First Floor.

More incentives for small area uses vs.
larger ones. + ~~not~~ Different street uses for
~~a particular~~

Sokol = little small locally owned stores. = maybe chains
ok.

* District solutions = big chain is District Center
+ smaller elsewhere.

= ~~that~~ retail is elsewhere = Newton is
going to Newton/Walden/Medick.

Danden not encourage the large retail chains.

~~Do not want~~ We want to encourage small

key to small. = Abing "mix"

~~Find~~ solutions seem different to some.

Key to small. = vs. local small retail.

Highline + Chestnut.

Spit / No More Hybrid?

As " Chestnut?"

~~Large retail~~ No Danden

A. Up to 3 stories - not 4 ^{GROUP 5, PG. 1}
No flat roofs

Tie height to sidewalk improvements
and design controls

No continuous street wall
courtyards etc.

B. OK if viable

C. No consensus on structure
Get commuter rail parking out
of downtown

GROUP 5, PG 2

E.

1. hurt mostly

Redirection of some is ok
where?

2. Possibly. Some are
problems. Not good for
cyclists

A. URBAN DESIGN: HEIGHT & MASSING

1/2. GENERALLY AGREE WITH CONCEPT...
WOULD CREATE MORE 'BUZZ' VIBRANT
DOWNTOWN..... WITH WIDER SIDEWALK
TO OFFSET VERTICALITY & A
CANOPY OF STREET TREES.

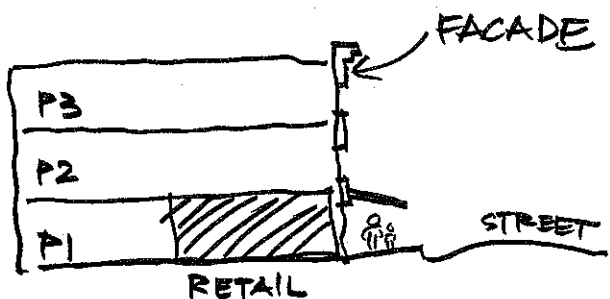
B. UPPER STORY HOUSING

1/2. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT
GENERALLY DESIRABLE. WOULD
ADD TO VIBRANT DOWNTOWN.
AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPPORTUNITY.
RESIDENTIAL COMPONENT
REINFORCES PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC, WITH
TRAIN, PERFECT FOR SMART GROWTH.

Group 6, pg 1

C PARKING STRUCTURE.

1. STRUCTURED PARKING IS DESIRABLE, NECESSARY ~~FOR~~ INCENTIVE FOR DEVELOPMENT IF OFF-SETS ZONING & FOR ENCOURAGING MORE DOWNTOWN INTENSITY (VISITS). IDEALLY WOULD ALSO BE MIXED USE, RETAIL ON GROUND FLOOR? OR DISGUISED AS PART OF VILLAGE DESIGN GUIDELINES.



Group 6, pg 2

STREET SCAPE & - PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT.

1. STREET SCAPE CRITICAL
TO DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION.
 - a. SHORTER CROSS WALKS
 - b. WIDER SIDEWALKS (POSSIBLY REMOVE
SOME STREET PARKING) TRADE OFF
 - c. CANOPY OF STREET TREES
 - d. OUTDOOR SEATING
 - e. pedestrian connections, & linking
various town zones needed.

Group 6, pg 3

1-7 IMPROVED STREET SCAPE
ADDITIONAL HEIGHT WOULD CREATE
A BETTER MIX-USE
+ WOULD ATTRACT MORE DIVERSE PEOPLE

WANT A DIVERSE AND INTERESTING
ROOF LINES (AGAINST SKY)

WELLESLEY NARROWED STS. TO
MAKE THEM MORE PEDESTRIAN
FRIENDLY, (+WIDEN SIDEWALKS IN
PLACES)
w/COMPLIMENTARY BLDG. STYLES,
SIGNAGE + WALKWAY MATERIAL,
FLOWERS (BOXES)

IS THERE AN OLIN CAL. IMPACT?

Group 7, Pg 2

(2-7) TOWN HALL OUGHT NOT TO
RESTRICT HEIGHT-

LETS HAVE VARIETY + NOT BE
LIMITED TO A (VILLAGE) THEME

STREET-SCAPE MATTERS MORE THAN
HEIGHT (FOR FEELING OF WELLBEING)

RE: HEIGHT - SUN CONCERNS
(MELTING SNOW ETC.)

Group 7, pg 3.

(3-7)

YES. OVERALL

A. #2

O.K. IF BALANCED OVERALL DESIGN
ALSO IN REGARDS TO INFRASTRUCTURE
IMPROVED

B. -1 - OVERALL YES

2. DEN. YES

W/ PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED
CONCERNS

Group 7, Pg 4

H-7 PARKING STRUCTURE

① $\frac{1}{2}$ NO — $\frac{1}{2}$ YES

② $\frac{1}{2}$ NO — $\frac{1}{2}$ YES

③ Walgreens
Underground

P-4 NO

P-5 — 1

P-6 — ϕ

P-7 — 1

Group 7, Pg 5

5-7

YES - 1

D.

the Rest said

1.) Why would we discourage
their interest in Dev.

2) YES - All

3) YES - All

4) YES - All

Other Comments

Please state any comments or questions you may have about the Concept Development Plan presented by the Downtown Study Committee:

I was pleased to hear
that new traffic signal
could improve flow
at Chapel / Art Plaza.

4. The town should encourage construction (at private expense) of one or more parking structures if these are demonstrated to be a significant incentive to development and increased tax base.

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

5. The town should encourage construction (at public expense) of one or more parking structures if these are demonstrated to be a significant incentive to development and increased tax base.

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

The attached map shows potential parking locations discussed in the presentation. Indicate by a number (no. 1 highest, etc) your preference for location of parking structures.

6. The "village concept" discussed in workshop no. 1 included the desired mixed use of retail, office and housing.

The town should encourage housing in the development of all three districts.

Strongly Agree • Agree * • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

7. The town should encourage or provide landscape treatment along street frontage in the Highland Avenue and Chestnut Street Business Districts.

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

* HOUSING IN CENTER + CHESTNUT IS A DIFFICULT
SELL ACCORDING TO OWNERS + OTHER PARTICIPANTS.
LOW-RISE APARTMENT BUILDINGS WERE NOT
PART OF THE "VILLAGE CONCEPT"

Other Comments

Please state any comments or questions you may have about the Concept Development Plan presented by the Downtown Study Committee:

THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION OF REPLACING TELEPHONE POLES WITH UNDERGROUND WIRING (AS SHOWN IN THE PHOTOS ON EACH TABLE OF ANOTHER COMMUNITY). AT VERY LEAST, THERE SHOULD BE ONLY 1 POLE AT EACH LOCATION.

CONCEPT PLAN CHANGED DISTRICTS TO BE MORE DENSELY BUILT WITHOUT THE "LARGER" RETAIL SPACES WE WERE TOLD THAT BUSINESSES WOULD NEED TO COME TO NEEDHAM.

THE CONCEPT PLAN DID NOT ADDRESS CONCERNS OF MANY PARTICIPANTS:

MAINTENANCE OF ROADS, SIDEWALKS, & PROPERTIES

A GREATER VARIETY OF RETAIL STORES IS NEEDED

NOT JUST BANKS, RESTAURANTS - [CONTROL BY ZONING?]

BETTER ENFORCEMENT OF PARKING REGULATIONS

WOULD TRAFFIC FLOW BE IMPROVED IF CHAPEL STREET + HIGHLAND AVE (FROM MAY STREET TO GT PLAIN) BE PARALLEL ONE-WAY STREETS?

WELLESLEY BANS HEAVY TRUCKS FROM SOME STREETS - IF THIS WAS DONE IN CENTER OF NEEDHAM IT WOULD GREATLY IMPROVE VEHICLE + ONE

Other Comments

Please state any comments or questions you may have about the Concept Development Plan presented by the Downtown Study Committee:

A lot of the Gr^t Plain Are on street parking should be removed so sidewalk can be wider and landscaping improved.

Other Comments

Please state any comments or questions you may have about the Concept Development Plan presented by the Downtown Study Committee:

I really like the idea of pedestrian links!

Parking should be either underground (best option) or disguised & shared with retail space

Attract ① bookstore, ② department store, and ③ cinema to town. Partner with OLIN COLLEGES ON ① AND ③.

FOR URBAN PLANNING I HIGHLY RECOMMEND READING BILL MCKIBBEN'S BOOK "HOPE, HUMAN AND WILD" FOR SOME VERY CREATIVE, SIMPLE AND COST-EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS TO OUR PROBLEMS!

Claudia Yapp
781-444-0949

Other Comments

Please state any comments or questions you may have about the Concept Development Plan presented by the Downtown Study Committee:

I would not like to see an unbroken line of 3+ or 4 story buildings in any section of town. This would not be what I consider "maintaining a village environment". There should always be a mix, with a place for one and two story buildings. No mention was made of the restoration of Town Hall exterior. desperately needed!

Other Comments

Please state any comments or questions you may have about the Concept Development Plan presented by the Downtown Study Committee:

I think separating retail/offices and residential into separate buildings is the way to go.

The Town-wide Visioning Session proved most engaging and revealing. There was so much consensus, so many points of agreement. They jumped out at me as we talked the issues through and then heard the opinions of the other groups. Expressed repeatedly was the belief that design was essential in considering higher density structures. Most participants supported 3, and many even 3 +1 structures if their design, their overall appearance and construction, enhanced streetscape, and architecturally maintained the village look of town. Attention to streetscape and appearance are crucial. Boxy buildings, structures devoid of architectural enhancement and character, which might also canyonize downtown generate strong opposition to increasing density. Expressed also was the need to protect residential areas by containing density to 2 or 2 +1 along Great Plain Avenue as construction approached residential areas. No encroachment of high density above 2 or possibly 2+1 near residential areas.

The concept of multi use was agreed upon by most. I still envision apartments above retail stores as one answer to the demand for affordable housing. How appealing to reside close by so many of the town's assets: it's shops, transportation, restaurants, Town Hall, hospital and open space (Town Common, Green Field, and even Memorial Park). Personally, I do not favor providing additional housing by constructing apartment buildings in downtown, but by creating living space in multi use structures. I believe apartment houses of any height would substantially and negatively change the town's character.

Although there were many differing opinions as to where to construct a parking structure, there was much agreement that one was needed if increased density occurred. I think such a structure (voted down at Town meeting about 20 years ago) should be built close to downtown shopping, including the Chapel Street and Highland Avenue corridors. The goal is for people to park, then walk to the shops. Areas P-1, P-2, and P-4 would best accomplish that goal. P-7 seems to me too far, therefore, the least desirable, requiring too hearty a walk for some, which might discourage their shopping in Needham.

Over the last 40 years I have witnessed substantial changes in Needham, some advantageous, some not. I am encouraged by the depth of planning underlining this new vision for the downtown. Perhaps, I will only manage to see the metamorphosis begin, still, I feel the path you are moving along is a positive one for Needham's future, and I hope the bold steps are taken.

Lori Sockol

Other Comments

Please state any comments or questions you may have about the Concept Development

Plan presented by the Downtown Study Committee:

The Town should consider a design

① review Committee to ensure tasteful, thoughtful development.

② Roof heights could vary from 3-3 1/2 stories - steeped roofs, gables & dormers should be considered. No mansard roofs or any buildings.

③ Landscaping and outdoor sidewalks are essential. Street owners should consider outdoor boxes or other forms displays of natural materials.

Other Comments

Please state any comments or questions you may have about the Concept Development Plan presented by the Downtown Study Committee:

TO OFFSET A RELUCTANCE OF HABITATIONAL OCCUPANCY
OVER 1ST FLOOR BUSINESS, CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE
GIVEN TOWARDS ENCOURAGING HABITATIONAL OCCUPANCY ONLY
STRUCTURES (UP TO THE 3+1 STORY HEIGHT) WITHIN ALL
THREE DISTRICTS.

PARKING AS A REQUIREMENT OF INDIVIDUAL LOT DEVELOPMENT
WILL CURTAIL MUCH DEVELOPMENT SINCE AVAILABLE LAND IS
LIMITED AND COST OF UNDERGROUND PARKING MAKES SITE
DEVELOPMENT FINANCIALLY UNATTRACTIVE. AN ATTRACTIVE
PARKING STRUCTURE, SET BACK FROM STREETS (I.E. EATON SQUARE)
WOULD PERMIT RELAXING OR ELIMINATING ON SITE PARKING
REQUIREMENTS.

NEEDHAM DOWNTOWN STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

June 25, 2007

Stakeholder Interest

Please circle the one category listed below which best describes your relationship to the three zoning districts being studied: Center Business, Chestnut Street Business, Highland Business:

Property owner

Business owner

Resident near the three districts

Resident at large

When I think about reducing my carbon footprint it will be important to have incentives for me to use my car much less so I will walk, bike take public transportation

Questions

Circle the one answer that best describes your response.

All Three Districts

1. The town should encourage significant development and/or redevelopment.

Strongly Agree

• Agree •

Disagree

• Strongly Disagree

2. The town should relax height restrictions if these are demonstrated to be a significant impediment to redevelopment.

Strongly Agree

• Agree •

Disagree

• Strongly Disagree

3. The town currently has **non-binding** architectural guidelines for the Center Business District.

The town should consider establishment of **binding** architectural regulations consistent with "Village Design" for the three districts in exchange for increased height and story standards.

Strongly Agree

• Agree •

Disagree

• Strongly Disagree

Other Comments

Please state any comments or questions you may have about the Concept Development Plan presented by the Downtown Study Committee:

think about air quality

impervious surfaces

Natural light limitations due to higher structures

Bike paths - make it easy & safe for bikers

encourage pedestrian use

public transportation

we need to think about the impact of global warming

green building design so important

Highland Avenue Business District

16. The current height limit of buildings is 40 feet (3 stories).

Building height limit should be retained.

*why not
go taller
here also?
3+1*

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

17. The district should be redeveloped to give greater pedestrian safety and convenience special importance.

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

18. Buildings in the Highland Avenue Business District are required to be set back 50 feet from abutting residential district boundaries.

The town should consider reducing the 50 foot setback if this will make redevelopment more likely and if appropriate conditions protecting abutting residents are imposed.

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

Other Comments

Please state any comments or questions you may have about the Concept Development Plan presented by the Downtown Study Committee:

Setback of buildings to allow
bigger sidewalks, safety
!streetscape!

planned architecture: strong design standards

start with a model area; example
theater block

like mixed use in downtown

SR CITIZEN CENTER
downtown !

4. The town should encourage construction (at private expense) of one or more parking structures if these are demonstrated to be a significant incentive to development and increased tax base.

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

5. The town should encourage construction (at public expense) of one or more parking structures if these are demonstrated to be a significant incentive to development and increased tax base.

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

The attached map shows potential parking locations discussed in the presentation.

Indicate by a number (no. 1 highest, etc) your preference for location of parking structures.

(1) P4 (2) P3 NOT UNDERGROUND - TOO EXPENSIVE

6. The "village concept" discussed in workshop no. 1 included the desired mixed use of retail, office and housing.

The town should encourage housing in the development of all three districts.

HIGHLAND - YES
CENTER - YES
CHESTNUT - NO

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

7. The town should encourage or provide landscape treatment along street frontage in the Highland Avenue and Chestnut Street Business Districts.

ALREADY HAS TREES BY MEMORIAL

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

Chestnut Street Business District

11. The current height limit of buildings is 35 feet (2 1/2 stories).

a. The height limit of buildings should be increased to 40 feet (3 stories).

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

b. The height limit of buildings should be increased to 48 feet (4 stories) if the top floor is set back or sloped from the edge of the building.

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

12. The town should support significant expansion of Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital.

What is significant?

SUPPORT UNDERGROUND PARKING AND A SURFACE LEVEL WITH A 2 STORY EXPANSION HOSP. EXPANSION ON FLOOR 2 + 3

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

13. The town should facilitate the development of medical office buildings in the vicinity of the hospital.

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

14. The district should be redeveloped to give greater pedestrian safety and convenience special importance.

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

15. Buildings in the Chestnut Street Business District are required to be set back 50 feet from abutting residential district boundaries.

The town should consider reducing the 50 foot setback if this will make redevelopment more likely and if appropriate conditions protecting abutting residents are imposed.

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

Other Comments

Please state any comments or questions you may have about the Concept Development Plan presented by the Downtown Study Committee:

STRONGLY SUGGEST (P 4) AS A MULT LEVEL ABOVE
GROUND PARKING FACILITY SINCE IT IS SHADOWED BY
RETAIL (WHICH MAY BE THREATENED) AND CLOSE TO BETA FORMAL.

Other Comments

Please state any comments or questions you may have about the Concept Development Plan presented by the Downtown Study Committee:

Four stories seem like too much. You cannot maintain the village atmosphere with buildings this tall. Two & half to three stories is more than enough. The contrast between these very tall buildings downtown, and what we have today is too much. We would lose all the openness and light we have today. No amount of "street scraping" could compensate for the loss of openness.

Other Comments

Please state any comments or questions you may have about the Concept Development Plan presented by the downtown Study Committee:

At the June 25 meeting I was impressed with the vision of a denser yet attractive, pedestrian-friendly town center. I appreciate the careful planning that has been done and the opportunity for public input.

My main concern is that this vision of the future Needham is not "visionary" enough to address a pressing issue which cannot be ignored -- global climate change. Most residents realize that we will be shifting away from a fossil fuel economy and must greatly increase energy conservation and the use of alternative energy. A denser Needham Center can be part of the solution, offering residents more services and retail close to home. Two aspects, however, need more attention.

Transportation: In my opinion, the issue of transportation has not been addressed with the creativity evidenced in other aspects of the long-range plan. Planning the future of downtown Needham will have to go far beyond simply thinking about where to locate parking garages. As denser development causes an increase in the number of employees, residents, and shoppers downtown, the number of cars must at the same time be decreased. This is an environmental imperative as well as a way of preserving the character of Needham that its residents cherish. Nothing will destroy the "village" feel of Needham like traffic clogging up the downtown.

Here's an opportunity for a win-win situation. When people get out of their cars or come downtown without vehicles, increased foot traffic benefits both retailers and the environment. No one likes, or benefits from, car traffic. Some things to consider:

- More bike paths
- Incentives for employers to promote car pooling,
- On a Greater Boston level, more bus connections that would enable workers not living in Needham to take public transportation,
- Incentives for condo or apartment complexes to offer zip cars,
- A small trolley that make loops into the neighborhoods to bring shoppers downtown (Perhaps an Olin student could do an independent study project examining the potential and best way to do this.)
- More parking at Needham Heights and Needham Junction to encourage use of public transportation (It makes sense to keep a traffic knot like Needham Center mainly for commuters coming on foot.)
- New streams of revenue, such as a restaurant tax, to fund such projects.

Energy Conservation

Most renovations or new construction need waivers of certain requirements. In return, the town could ask for energy conservation measures such as more insulation, more efficient heating systems, energy efficient appliances, etc. This would also benefit businesses by reducing energy costs.

4. The town should encourage construction (at private expense) of one or more parking structures if these are demonstrated to be a significant incentive to development and increased tax base.

Strongly Agree • Agree ☒ Disagree • Strongly Disagree

1st the town should evaluate the benefits of parking-sharing

5. The town should encourage construction (at public expense) of one or more parking structures if these are demonstrated to be a significant incentive to development and increased tax base.

Strongly Agree • Agree ☒ Disagree • Strongly Disagree

A parking structure should be associated with no parking requirements on new development.

The attached map shows potential parking locations discussed in the presentation. Indicate by a number (no. 1 highest, etc) your preference for location of parking structures.

6. The "village concept" discussed in workshop no. 1 included the desired mixed use of retail, office and housing.

The town should encourage housing in the development of all three districts.

Strongly Agree • ☒ Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

7. The town should encourage or provide landscape treatment along street frontage in the Highland Avenue and Chestnut Street Business Districts.

☒ Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

Other Comments

Please state any comments or questions you may have about the Concept Development Plan presented by the Downtown Study Committee:

At stake for Woodhous's future: the reduction of the number of cars, and attraction of more people to live and shop.

Priorities for the Council should be:

- release height & density requirements
- cancel all parking requirements on new developments
- evaluate the benefits of shared parkings.
- study the feasibility of bike paths and traffic-calming - easing the flow of car should not be the point NOW.
- study the feasibility of taxing the use of car within downtown, at least of big cars.
- study the feasibility of shuttle buses.

Hold on the parking structure:

Wait for the study about parking-sharing and for the improvement of the transit and bike circulation.

Thanks.

Other Comments

Please state any comments or questions you may have about the Concept Development Plan presented by the Downtown Study Committee:

There was significant confusion regarding how zoning/bldg height would result in aesthetically appropriate architecture - this needs to be addressed. Solution is to have rigorous and clearly defined goals for architectural design.

Presentation mentioned study group having looked at other towns - but no discussion of what was learned - what town is the model of what Piedham wants to be like? An articulation of that goal should be forthcoming. Presentation also included no discussion of the findings re need for more height in order to attract new/better businesses. Is height requirement confirmed by developer feedback?

→ Is it a goal to bring more outside in? to increase tax revenue to support other town issues? to have town center more active at night?

Ordering of Chyl St. w/ bldgs of same height as Town Hall is example of what should not be encouraged - not very village-like at all - it's too urban and dwarfs TH.

Town should consider finding free pty structure if that is the way to create better streetscape & get rid of nasty gaps in bldg edge. (over)

What about other uses re: types of stores. Is there proposed size limit to keep out mega-discounters? What about chains?

Needham Center could desperately use a Starbucks! A place one can go to sit for a while, see, be seen, etc. Whether it's a chain or not. Need to revisit this.

Also what about requirements for retail at 1st fl. — streetscape is best when there is visual interest. Town Center has too many banks. Chestnut has doctors' offices at street level.

Obvious solution for West Plain is to eliminate pky on one side & widen sidewalk — maybe same for Highland.

NEEDHAM DOWNTOWN STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

June 25, 2007

Stakeholder Interest

Please circle the one category listed below which best describes your relationship to the three zoning districts being studied: Center Business, Chestnut Street Business, Highland Business:

Property owner

Business owner

Resident near the three districts

Resident at large

- JEFF KRISTELLER - 138 ELMWOOD RD.

Questions

Circle the one answer that best describes your response.

All Three Districts

1. The town should encourage significant development and/or redevelopment.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

2. The town should relax height restrictions if these are demonstrated to be a significant impediment to redevelopment.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

3. The town currently has **non-binding** architectural guidelines for the Center Business District.

The town should consider establishment of **binding** architectural regulations consistent with "Village Design" for the three districts in exchange for increased height and story standards.

SHOULD BE MORE THAN CURRENT BUT NOT ONEROUS AS LEXINGTON HISTORIC OR BAY ARCHITECTURE VARIETY & QUALITY SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED. NOT ONE "LOOK"

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Center Business District

8. The current height limit of buildings is 35 feet (2 1/2 stories).

a. The height limit of buildings should be increased to 37 feet (3 stories).

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

THREE AND 1/2 STORIES SHOULD BE ALLOWED

b. The height limit of buildings should be increased to 48 feet (4 stories) if the top floor is set back or sloped from the edge of the building.

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

9. The district should be redeveloped to give greater pedestrian safety and convenience special importance.

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

10. Buildings in the Center Business District are required to be set back 50 feet from abutting residential district boundaries.

The town should consider reducing the 50 foot setback if this will make redevelopment more likely and if appropriate conditions protecting abutting residents are imposed.

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

IT SEEMS THERE ARE VERY FEW PARCELS
THAT WOULD ACTUALLY BE AFFECTED

Highland Avenue Business District

16. The current height limit of buildings is 40 feet (3 stories).

Building height limit should be retained.

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

17. *The district should be redeveloped to give greater pedestrian safety and convenience special importance.*

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

TWO MORE CROSS WALKS BADLY NEEDED.

18. Buildings in the Highland Avenue Business District are required to be set back 50 feet from abutting residential district boundaries.

The town should consider reducing the 50 foot setback if this will make redevelopment more likely and if appropriate conditions protecting abutting residents are imposed.

NOT SURE.

Strongly Agree • Agree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree

Other Comments

Please state any comments or questions you may have about the Concept Development Plan presented by the Downtown Study Committee:

~~THE~~
THERE SEEM TO BE 3 AREAS TO BE DEALT WITH. I WOULD BE MOST CONCERNED INITIALLY WITH THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT IN THAT THIS IS THE REAL "HEART" OF DOWNTOWN AND CURRENTLY HAS THE MOST ISSUES

① TRAFFIC, STREETSCAPE, PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLINESS
SOME THINGS SUCH AS SIDEWALK WIDENING, BUMPING OUT SIDEWALKS AT CROSSWALKS, PLANTINGS AND TRAFFIC LIGHT ~~COORDINATION~~ SIGNAL COORDINATION AND UPGRADES COULD BE DONE IN THE ONE TO TWO YEAR SPAN WITH LESS THAN \$1 MILLION FOR THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT.

② PARKING STRUCTURES - SLIGHTLY LONGER TERM, HIGHER COST, LIKELY COORDINATED w/ DEVELOPMENT - A MUST FOR ANY SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN DENSITY.

③ ZONING - DEVELOPED OVER NEXT YEAR OR SO, WITH AN OUTLOOK FOR 2-20 YR CHANGES IN BUILDINGS

ALL THREE ISSUES CAN BE WORKED ON SIMULTANEOUSLY.

THE STREETSCAPE ISSUES SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED IN 2008 - 2009 TO SHOW RESIDENTS, LANDLORDS, AND TENANTS THAT THE TOWN IS SERIOUS ABOUT DOING SOMETHING AND TO HAVE AN INITIAL IMPACT ON QUALITY OF LIFE.

June 16, 2007

Needham Center Study Committee
Planning Board
Town Hall, 1471 Highland Ave.
Needham, Mass. 02492

Dear Committee Members,

I ask that you give serious consideration to two approaches to your Downtown recommendations and plans. First, the unified management of existing surface parking. Second, placing rental units in the proposed three-story store-and-housing structures to be located in the downtown.

Unified parking management:

The enclosed map of the town center from the Chapel St. gas station to Needham Junction along Chestnut St. indicates that Chestnut St. is a strip mall with abundant parking. The recent addition of the new medical building (Junction St.) and its accompanying parking spaces has increased the total supply.

The town's sense of parking inadequacy derives from the fact that most of this parking is private and fragmented except for the lots at the train stations and the town lot behind Great Plain Avenue. This very extensive parking area could, however, be fashioned into a unified system. The method that most immediately recommends itself is for the town to lease these parking areas and to manage them as continuous units.

If these lots were connected to each other along the railroad tracks and at the rear lot lines they would form continuous parking spaces adequate to everyone's needs. The unification at the back (as is common in town parking lots) would enable us to reduce the curb cuts, stop the dangerous front parking, and to create a wide and pleasant sidewalk along Chestnut St. The street itself could then be planted with a continuous canopy of horse chestnut trees as its name suggests.

Second, downtown rentals over the stores:

I can tell you as a historian of such structures (Streetcar Suburbs) that the housing above stores in towns and along Main Streets has never been occupied by people of wealth. As your marketing study told you, expensive condominiums will not succeed to any degree in such buildings. Rather, rental units could be very successful if the rents were moderate. In this case young people, and small families of limited means could find good places there.

One downtown idea was to have the store-housing buildings fitted out with underground parking. A nice idea, but one that can only be financed by high priced condominium units above the stores. Your housing study reports this to be an impossibility. Nevertheless, if each unit were to be assigned a reserved surface parking place then rental units can succeed and prove very useful to the town. We need to have places for our young people when they are starting out. Such units could serve that function.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sam Bass Warner".

Sam Bass Warner

Map enclosed

4- Barriers to Implementation

Parking

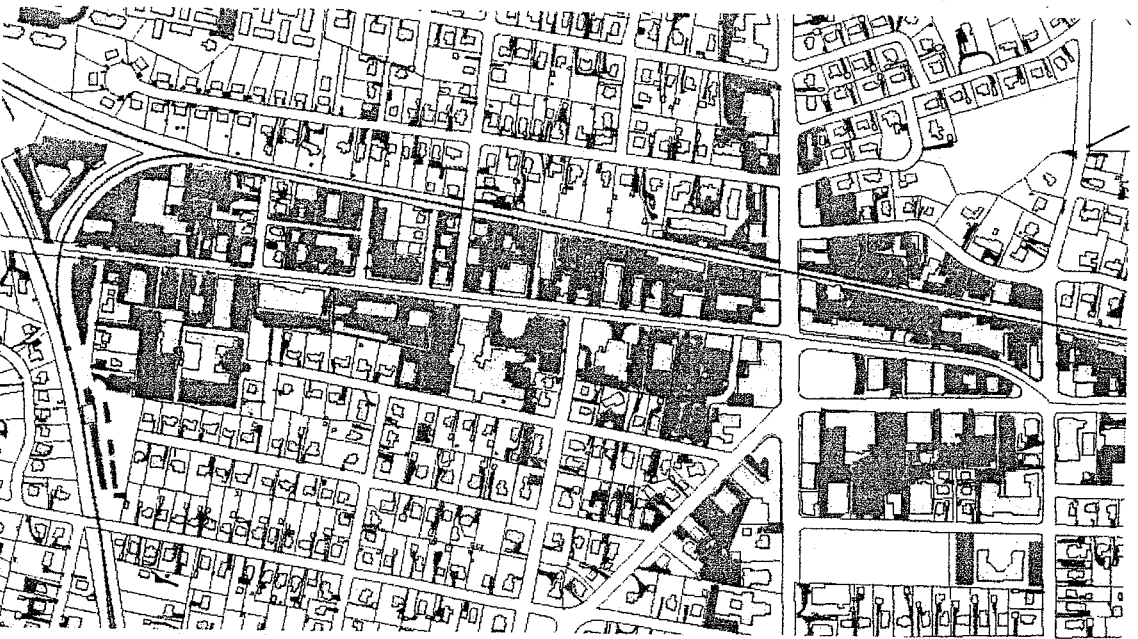
The amount of land dedicated to parking in the study areas is roughly equivalent to twenty-one football fields. While parking in Needham center and Highland business district is sufficient, it needs to become more efficient. The abundance of parking lots interrupts the urban fabric and detracts from the pedestrian experience. Furthermore, current parking arrangements are inefficient. However, as long as residents and retailers insist upon high parking ratios, parking will always be a major barrier to redevelopment and change.

Fiscal Reality

Revitalization requires public funds, which in many cases is then followed by increased private investment. In Needham, the usual sources are largely unavailable because of their limited ability to float bonds, and the current trend of decreasing annual appropriations for public projects.

Resistance to change

Needham is already a great place to live. "Why fix something that ain't broken?" is a valid question. We believe that Needham could be even better and that a direction set now could ensure and increase the quality of life in Needham as it goes through changes in time.



Parking within the study area: green

*02.11.2014, Steve's Plan
for Needham Center (2014)*



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEEDHAM

P.O. Box 920115, Needham, MA 02492

www.lwv-needham.org

June 9, 2007

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Ms Lee Newman
Planning Dept
Town of Needham
1471 Highland Avenue
Needham, MA 02492

Dear Ms Newman:

We are writing to urge the Down Town Study Committee to integrate environmental priorities more fully into the short- and long-term goals of the Downtown Development Study project currently underway in order to confront global warming in Needham.

We have a vision of downtown Needham as a place of natural comfort and beauty, which encourages residents to do more of their errands and shopping locally and on foot-- rather than driving. We believe this will help reduce traffic congestion, and with it, air and noise pollution, and generally make Needham Center a more attractive and pleasant place to be, while maintaining its small-town atmosphere.

As a first step towards this goal, we urge you to include the following in the smart growth plans for the downtown area:

1. Encourage the use of alternative transportation possibilities by providing safe bike/rollerblading lanes along main axes, and by increasing bike rack installations downtown and at commuter rail stations.
2. Plant trees along all downtown axes to create a more park-like streetscape and provide natural cooling during the warmer months to buildings and pedestrians.
3. Add recycling bins downtown next to the trash bins.
4. Give priority to the pedestrians in winter following snowfalls by enforcing snow removal by-laws.
5. Increase the number of crosswalks and add "yield to pedestrians" signs to all of them in town.

As a medium-term goal, we urge you to seriously consider establishing and enforcing green standards and codes for all new buildings or renovations in terms of energy and water.

Attached is our long-term vision as a narrative of walking in Needham in mid-century. We have also undertaken a green assessment of the project as evidenced in the published meeting notes. We are available for elaborating on both our vision of the future and short-term priorities.

Sincerely yours,

Susan McGarvey, President
League of Women Voters of Needham

CC: Downtown Study Committee members

Attachments: A walk in mid-century Needham (2 pages)
Downtown study assessment (3 pages)

A Walk in Mid-Century Needham

The breeze is blowing one morning in early summer as I arrive on Chestnut Street from Oak Street, accompanied by my family, pulling my savvy shopping trolley made from eco-materials. What a pleasure it is to arrive on this street lined with CO₂-absorbing trees, almost like walking in a park all the way down to Needham Junction station! I join many other pedestrians out for their Saturday morning shopping and stroll, and enjoy smelling the beautiful flowers lining the sidewalk and listening to the birds singing from their perch in the trees. Even in the heat of the summer, this walkway is well shaded and people continue to use it. Many crosswalks cut across Chestnut Street so it's easy to use the street, going side to side as the day's list requires.

Some older people have stopped to take it all in at a bench in the shade under a tree. I overhear Jeanne McKnight and Susan McGarvey. They must have been friends for a long time and been here during the transformation to a sustainable modern town that Needham has become. A few bikes get a special green light just for bikes on the bike path on the other side of the street and they swiftly pick up speed. I notice a few electric cars, quietly, finding their way to a parking spot with plug-ins, and then I continue walking to the same destination as their drivers.

Today is the semi-weekly Farmer's Market, so I am headed toward the Common where the streets have been closed off to traffic to create a pedestrian zone. It has really become a community event, during 7-8 months of the year, where I meet neighbors and friends and take a coffee on one of the terrace cafés. The majority of the produce and products sold are made or grown locally. The quality is excellent and it delightful to eat fresh food that your neighbors have produced

Needham has a few farms, all organic. Pesticide free, it is a safe place to live, and, by consequence, the cancer incidence is one of the lowest in Massachusetts. People in Needham have always valued health, and so it was in this vein that pedestrian life around the Common grew after reaching a low at the peak of the gasoline-powered automobile era. The communal Gardens are also a place where people meet and help each other, sharing expertise and recipes for locally grown food.

All through the winter, it is possible to get out and walk, even for people pushing baby strollers! Since so many people walk or practice "park and walk", the businesses, municipality, and residents all pull together to remove the snow from sidewalks and bike paths.

People come downtown to be in the "center", the heart of the community. Many seniors, after their activities at the Senior Center, stay downtown to have contact with young parents and children out for their errands. Almost everything residents need is available at thriving local businesses and the window-shopping adds to the pleasure of the stroll in the downtown area. There is a certain charming New England aesthetic in the awnings, signage, and lampposts that delimit the center and this cohesion feels unifying to residents and visitors alike.

Along the way I notice a group of bins for refuse and each type of recyclable material. But they are not very full. In the area of packaging, what we Needham residents like about the Farmer's Market, is that so little is required, and the waste volume in Needham has consequently diminished. Additionally, manufacturers drastically reduced the amount of packaging compared to 40 years ago when the cost of gasoline was just starting to seriously climb. Where there is refuse, Needham residents value recycling and composting.

Arriving at the Common, I notice the enormous bike rack where the bikers have now parked. A glance up and down Great Plain Avenue reveals green mixed-use buildings. They are built with well-being in mind: several residential floors over a commercial ground floor, with embellished balconies, built to conserve energy and water. Trees, benches, and storefront windows line the sidewalks and confer their human scale to the street. Green roofs are the norm, as are grey-water recovery systems and general permeability principles recover rainwater for watering the trees and plants instead of it running off into the sewer. Looking east on Great Plain Avenue, I think of the small remote shops located in neighborhoods to serve daily needs: a few fruits and vegetables, fresh bread, dairy products. Always within walking distance is the rule.

I continue my walk up Highland Avenue toward the library and Needham Heights. More trees shade my journey.

Finally, it is so very connecting to live in Needham. Trains run regularly to Boston, where many Needham residents work and take advantage of cultural offerings. Light rail and small, flexible, clean buses connect to neighboring towns, as well as make round trips through Needham to bring residents downtown. Bus stops and train stations are furnished with shelters from the elements. Even the ample bike racks at the train stations have a roof for rain protection.

Bike paths continue on into other towns, so residents who work outside of the town can easily and safely take their bicycles. Walking trails connect woods and waterways, enabling downtown dwellers to commune with nature, reducing their life stress when they so desire, and practically from their doorstep. The natural streetscape combined with this network has helped Needham retain its small town flavor and is an attractive place to live in the Boston metro area.

There is a sense of health, nature, and community that permeates the town, reflected in its structure and amenities. I am so happy to be living in Needham in 2050.

Downtown Study Project: rapid assessment

Does the downtown study project, as it is conceived thus far, move Needham in the direction of sustainability?

When Needham includes sustainability as a long-term goal, the project perspective changes and different elements become crucial. With this new standpoint in mind elaborated in the text 'A walk in mid-century Needham', we have assessed the ability of the ongoing project to go in the right direction and we have listed our concerns and suggestions to help improve the project.

A sustainable town is...

1- Reliant on transportation networks and promotes walking, cycling and transit use while reducing dependence on cars

⊗⊗⊗ In the project the focus is still on the car. Meeting reports show major concerns on parking and traffic flow, when the emphasis should be on traffic-calming and traffic-slowing, and on the promotion of alternative means of transportation.

⊖ The parking structure on the outskirts of downtown, at Junction Station, is an important facility that could incite people to park and walk. However it must be accompanied by strict restrictions on off-street parking at each new development to achieve this objective.

⊗⊗ Pedestrian circulation is a concern in this project. Two additional pedestrian connections are considered, one at the southern end of the Chestnut street sub-area, and one between Needham Center and Greene's Field. We are encouraged by the improvement of the sidewalks and of the streetscape envisioned in the project.

- **Off-street parking** should be limited in order to discourage car use. The need of off-street parking should not be evaluated according to traffic engineering standards, as stated in the meeting report no.10. These standards are based on short-term and business-as-usual considerations. Instead, the long-term objective of sustainability should prevail:
 - Housing projects: (eg. in the Theatre Block scenario) off-street parking rate is 1.5 spaces per unit. It should be at 1 space per unit maximum, with car-free housing allowed in this area where transit is available. In addition, a mandatory parking fee per space could be required, and car-sharing facilities should be provided.
 - Retail project: off-street parking rate is 3-4 spaces per 1000 sf min. It should be reduced to 1 space per 1000 sf min. The systematic use of existing parking lots should be encouraged through parking lot-sharing (for instance during weekdays, churches' parking should be available for shoppers).
 - Office buildings project: there should be no minimum required since transit is available, instead of 3 spaces per 1000 sf min, as in the Chestnut Street scenarios.
- **Traffic-calming:** the suggestion to render Highland venue and Chapel Street one-way (refer to Meeting Report no.10), is a good way to slow down the traffic and to make room for a bike path. This idea should be extensively explored in the project.

- **Bike circulation:** making downtown more bike-friendly is not a major objective in the project. However biking should be promoted as environmentally friendly and healthy. Several ideas should be explored for downtown: design safe bike paths to schools, secure bike racks on buses, require bike parking spaces for new developments, connect Needham bike paths to the Massachusetts Bicycle Transportation Plan (see massbikeplan.org) ...
- **Transit system:** The bus system is still insufficient to connect downtown with the neighboring towns.

2- Self-sufficient with respect to energy, water, waste, food and materials

- ☺☺ There is no clear proposal in the project regarding energy-efficient building, green building, water savings, recycling, and urban agriculture.
- ☺ The planting of trees in the area will decrease the energy needs for air conditioning.
- Green architecture and building are key for energy and water savings, and must be required on new development projects. Incentives for developers to build green or to retrofit existing buildings need to be specifically stated in the project requirements. The respect of green building requirements, including green roofs, landscaping, grey water reuse... could, for instance, result in a higher density tradeoff.
- The Building code should be revised to include green building practices.
- Design a storm water management plan to make sure development will comply with storm water management requirements: reduce impervious cover, reduce pollutant sources, detain, treat and filter runoff close to the source... For instance, some cities like Bellevue, Washington, have established storm water utilities to generate revenues and incite the owners to maximize permeable surfaces.
- Extend sustainable landscaping practices: xeriscaping (planting local species), reuse of rain water, organic gardening practices to reduce pollutants...

3- Compact with a high density population and diversity of affordable, healthy places to live

- ☺☺ The project focuses on new development within the downtown perimeter. This will lead the way to a more compact and walkable town and will help preserve open spaces.
- ☺ So far the project encourages more density in the area of the study by allowing three to four story buildings where the height was limited to two, and by requiring mixed-use development (offices, housing, and business).
- This should go further by establishing minimum densities and building heights rather than focusing on maximum. For instance, the development of some places is not considered worth the investment because the FAR (Floor Area Ratio) is already over 0.50 (see Meeting Report no.10). This ratio could be set at 1.5 to 2.0 maximum and

0.5 minimum in downtown, so that investors would see an interest in further developing those parcels.

- Height over 3 or 4 stories in the different sub-areas could be allowed as a trade-off for complying with green buildings requirements.
- ? Is there a maximum density in the current zoning? If yes, this should be removed and replaced with a minimum density of 2-3 dwelling units per acre.
- ? Does the project envision a way to improve the balance between housing, workplace and recreation facilities? The different projects on Chestnut Street add some housing developments, offices and retail, but the question is how to make sure that the number of housing units will increase significantly (housing represents now 6% of the land use).

4- More sensitive to the natural environment and responsible toward the global climate

☺☺ The improvements of streetscape and the planting of trees envisioned in the project encourage us. This will help absorb greenhouse gases.

☹☹ The possibility of development on Greene's Field is a concern since it will decrease the amount of recreational facilities within downtown, while the development of housing will increase the number of people that will need such facilities within walking distance.

- Greene's Field should be secured as an open space. A portion of this space could be dedicated to a community garden.

5- Economically healthy with a sustainable local economy

☺☺ The project focuses on new developments within the downtown perimeter. This should generate local jobs.

- Explore the idea of a semi-weekly farmers' market to develop the local economy, and reinforce residents' sense of community.

**Needham Cultural Council
1471 Highland Avenue
Needham, MA 02492**

March 28, 2007

Dear Sirs and Madams,

The Needham Cultural Community is very interested in having a Cultural Arts Center in Needham. We understand that this may be a possibility if the Town Hall renovations include the restoration of the upper floor. The use of this space has been discussed greatly by the members of the Needham Cultural Council as well as the members of *NeedArts*, the collaboration of cultural organizations in town. We believe that this space would be ideal for many activities throughout the year which currently have no home. We also believe that it is possible to accommodate these activities in a way that would preserve the Town Hall Auditorium for use as a proper meeting space for public hearings and other Town business during the week.

If restored appropriately, the space could be used for rehearsals, performances, recitals, exhibits, and meetings. The cultural organizations in Needham presently must use church or school space, neither of which is adequate. Having a centrally located Performing Arts Space would also allow the organizations an opportunity to produce programs more often and would provide a central location for performance and exhibit information, which would benefit not only the performers but the residents of our town. We have learned from past surveys, that the residents would like an Arts Center where they can go to a variety of programs throughout the year and be informed about upcoming events easily.

Just to give you an idea of the potential use of this space, we currently have fifteen member organizations who produce over 100 programs a year. If you add in the general community use, children's and senior programs, rehearsal time, and recital time, you would have programs to benefit the community 3 or 4 times a week. The potential is even greater if this space were available for private teachers and outside groups. This space could be used every night of the week, either for the arts or public meetings!

Studies have shown that having a Cultural Arts Center in the downtown area is a tremendous draw to the vitality of the community, the businesses that are located downtown, and the quality of life for its residents. We are actively seeking a center such as this, for all the reasons mentioned above, and you have the ability to create it right here in the Town Hall! What could be a better fit!

We realize the management of this space would require support and we would be happy to help with the organization, scheduling, and other concerns that may arise. An active partnership of Town Government and the arts and performance interests would be a great benefit to all citizens of Needham and would provide the means to preserve and use a great public asset to its fullest potential.

Please consider this request as it would truly be a boost to Needham. Creating offices in a space which otherwise could be a tremendous asset to our town would be shortsighted.

We look forward to further discussion and hope you will include us as you plan for a vibrant downtown.

Sincerely,

Jean Cronin Connolly -chair
Norman Abbott
Sally Dempsey
Gail Gordon
Alice Kelleher
Claire Messing

Highland Glee Club
Needham Concert Society
Needham Fine & Performing Arts
Plugged In Teen Band Program
Quinobequin Quilters Guild
Longwood Opera Company

Letter of Support: Plugged In Teen Band Program

The Plugged In Teen Band Program in Needham is very excited about the possibility of a performance space at the Town Hall. Plugged In holds concerts twice a year. As there is currently not an adequate space in Needham where we can have these concerts, we have been holding the concerts at the Regent Theatre in Arlington. We would prefer to have the concerts in Needham as it is the home base for our organization and many of our students are from Needham. If we were to hold the concerts in Needham, we would sell more tickets and have a chance to showcase the talent of our students to more Needham residents. We often receive publicity in the Boston Globe and Herald, as well as New England Cable News, etc. Having our concerts in Needham would be good advertising for the Needham arts community.

Sandra Rizkallah
Tom Pugh
Plugged In Teen Band Program
146 Warren Street
Needham, MA
781-956-4281

Letter of support: Quinnobequin Quilters Guild

We are a guild of about 100-115 members. There are usually about 60-70 members at each meeting. Although the largest percentage of our members come from Needham, we currently meet at the Community Center in Wellesley

We usually hold our Quilt Show in Needham, which requires a large space.

In the past, the show has been in churches. However this last year we were at the Masonic Hall for the first time. But unfortunately one room was quite dark and people couldn't find it easily even though we had signs! Churches have become a problem in that they find it difficult to let us schedule far enough ahead for our needs because they don't know if they will need the space for themselves.

Also, many churches have daycare and will not allow lots of strangers in on Fri when we would have the first day of our show.

Having a wonderful space for our show is what we hope for. And if our meetings could be in the same place that would be a plus.

Cheryl Mountain
114 Newell Ave
Needham, MA
781-449-3219

Letter of Support: Fine and Performing Arts Department/Needham Public Schools

The Public School Fine and Performing Arts Department would love to see a centrally located, easily accessible, community performance venue, and the concept of the upper floor of the Town Hall appears to be a viable option. One program that would find this venue extremely beneficial would be our Private Lesson Program. Currently, the 25 private teachers, when they schedule their end of year recitals, are using classrooms, private homes, and "found" spaces throughout our schools. In addition, they are forced to hold recitals at less than desirable days/times due to the difficulty in finding available, suitable space. A Performing Arts Center would be ideal for them. This could add up to 25 recitals in May and June, not counting, the numerous independent private music instructors in the community.

The Friends of Music and the Performing Arts Department have also explored the idea of bringing in small semi-professional and professional chamber groups to perform for the community, as well as showcasing Needham's local own community adult talent. Again, a Performing Arts Center would be ideal for this use.

With Needham's proximity to Boston, there are numerous professional, semi-professional and college ensembles of all types, classical, folk, modern, jazz, ethnic, etc.) that would love a venue of the sort the Town Hall might provide. The enrichment to Needham's cultural community would be immense.

Finally, last summer, we began Needham's first ever Adult Community Band. The group rehearsed in the summer, culminating in a concert at the gazebo. A performing arts center would be ideal for rehearsals and additional performances for this group, and others like it, as we think about expanding it into the school year, which is currently impossible due to school facility constraints.

David Neves, Ed.D.
Director of Fine and Performing Arts
Needham Public Schools
Needham High School
609 Webster Street
Needham, Massachusetts 02494
Tel: (781) 455-0800 Ext. 2440
e-mail: david_neves@needham.k12.ma.us
Fax: (781) 455-0895

Highland Glee Club

March 22, 2007

Dear Jean,

As one of the older cultural institutions in Needham and an enthusiastic member of NeedArts, the Highland Glee Club has a strong interest in the Needham Cultural Council's efforts to find a centrally-located physical space which can be shared by the myriad arts groups which call Needham "home". In a thriving and increasingly multiethnic and multicultural community, the Town Hall's 3rd floor space can become, as well, a place to showcase these rich traditions. We wholeheartedly support the well-reasoned arguments expressed in your letter to the Board of Selectmen.

Sincerely,

Richard Wulf, President

Highland Glee Club

27 Fletcher Road

Needham

Mr. Lee Newman, Planning Board Director
Needham Town Hall
Needham, MA

23 June 2007

Re: Planning Needham's future

Dear Mr. Newman:

I am writing to address some areas that I hope the Planning Board is considering as it works to keep Needham a viable community in the coming years. My vision for Needham is best summed up in the word COMMUNITY. Community means a win-win, enriching, cooperative relationship between the old and young; between those rich in money and those rich in experience, good will, talent, and energy; between the merchants and consumers; between teachers and students; between the town and its college, OLIN; and so on.

Here are four ideas I would like to toss out for consideration:

Challenge: Revitalizing the downtown area and businesses.

Response: We need downtown stores that carry practical, useful items (a department store, affordable clothing stores, a book store, a movie theater).

This allows Needham residents to avoid trips to the mall, save on gas and reduce their carbon footprint. This would also attract shoppers from Dover, Westwood, etc.

It would be a coup if we could attract a Ben Franklin department store franchise to downtown Needham so that people could buy affordable, practical items without driving to the mall.

It would be wonderful to partner with OLIN College to replace the profit-making Waldenbooks store that was closed. To have a college town with no bookstore is awful. The Needham bookstore was profitable. That tells us that the people of Needham like to have a local bookstore where they can browse and buy. OLIN students could work in the store as part of a work-study program to defray tuition costs. Why not combine OLIN College's need for a bookstore with the town's need?

It would be wonderful to partner with OLIN College to reinstate the local cinema in Needham. Dedham has a downtown cinema. Newton has a downtown cinema. Surely, Needham could have a vital cinema that would attract people from Needham, Wellesley, Dover, Westwood, etc. Sharing the cinema with OLIN College could expand the type of films offered, expand the community that comes together at the movies, as well as share the financial costs/benefits. OLIN students could work at the cinema as part of a work-study program to defray tuition costs. A cinema would draw people to the downtown restaurants for before and after dining.

Challenge: Surviving gracefully in the coming crunch of rising costs of food, fuel, and living due to rising shortages of cheap oil and water, among other things.

Response: A community organic garden provides locally grown, fresh, healthy produce grown by town residents.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) and community garden plots are not new. Boston has the Victory Gardens, Natick has a CSA on Route 16, Dover has a CSA. What are we waiting for?

This is an excellent learning and confidence-building activity for our community's children. This could even be positive therapy to counter the rise in suicides, aimlessness, and drug abuse among teens.

Needham could partner with the School Department, the Community Council, the Needham Garden Club, OLIN College, and the University of Massachusetts in this endeavor.

Challenge: Creating a world class school system without breaking the bank.

Response: Studies have shown that children thrive, learn, and excel when they are in one-on-one (or as close to it as possible) learning situations. No amount of stuff can replace the boost to learning that this one-on-one relationship provides.

Needham, like the rest of the US, will soon have a majority of experienced, retired baby-boomers. Will we throw this valuable resource away when high taxes conflict with reduced, fixed incomes, and these longtime residents are forced to leave town?

Why not use this valuable population to create a world class educational system?

Invite Needham retirees to volunteer at local schools as teachers, teacher aids, visiting teachers, tutors, and mentors in exchange for part or all of their tax bills?

The budget would come out ahead, since the partial (or even total) tax bill would be far lower than the cost to hire the personnel.

The town would come out ahead because word would spread and people would want to live here.

The children would come out ahead because they would learn and be encouraged, as never before.

Needham's longtime residents would come out ahead because they would be able to continue to be useful members of the community and to live in their lifelong homes.

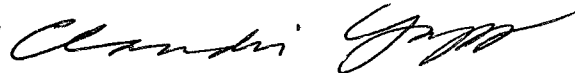
Challenge: Revitalizing the downtown area and businesses; Surviving gracefully in the coming crunch.

Response: Needham already uses the town common twice a year for a festival market celebration. Why not expand this event over the spring, summer, and fall months to include a weekly or monthly FARMER'S and CRAFTSPERSON'S MARKET. Local gardeners and craftspeople could sell their wares on Saturday morning. Perhaps we could locate this event on Greene's Field or in Memorial Park?

The Market is a wonderful way for people to gather, to build community, and to bring people downtown to the regular merchants.

I hope I have given you some food for thought. If you have any questions, please give me a call at 781-444-0949. I'd be delighted to work with you on any of these ideas.

Sincerely,



Claudia Yapp, 35 Robinwood Avenue, Needham, MA 02492

Questionnaire Tabulation Summary

Community Workshop #2 (06/25/07) Prepared on 07/11/07, Revised 07/12/07 (5 Questionnaires added)

Needham Downtown Study

		Property Owners					Business Owners					Residents Near 3 Districts					Residents at Large					Not Identified					TOTAL																																																											
		# of Questionnaires 2					# of Questionnaires 0					# of Questionnaires 7					# of Questionnaires 17					# of Questionnaires 1					# of Questionnaires 27																																																											
		Strongly Agree					Agree					Disagree					Strongly Disagree					No Answer					Strongly Agree					Agree					Disagree					Strongly Disagree					No Answer					Strongly Agree					Agree					Disagree					Strongly Disagree					No Answer					All Agree					All Disagree				
All Three Districts																																																																																						
1	The town should encourage significant development and / or redevelopment	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5	-	-	-	9	5	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	13	10	2	-	2	23	2																																																					
2	The town should relax height restrictions if these are demonstrated to be a significant impediment to redevelopment.	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	1	1	-	10	4	2	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	12	10	3	1	1	22	4																																																						
3	The town currently has non-binding architectural guidelines for the Center Business District. The town should consider establishment of binding architectural regulations consistent with "Village Design" for the three districts in exchange for increased height and story standards.	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	2	-	1	-	9	7	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	15	9	2	1	-	24	3																																																						
4	The town should encourage construction (at private expense) of one or more parking structures if these are demonstrated to be a significant incentive to development and increased tax base.	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	3	1	1	1	7	8	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	9	12	3	1	2	21	4																																																						
5	The town should encourage construction (at public expense) of one or more parking structures if these are demonstrated to be a significant incentive to development and increased tax base.	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	1	3	-	2	6	4	5	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	7	5	9	1	5	12	10																																																						
Preferred Parking Locations - Ranked with 1 being most preferred, 2 the next, etc. If blank, no preference given.																																																																																						
P-1 - Needham Center Station		(1) 1st																				(8) 1st, (1) 2nd, (1) 6th (10) TOTAL										(1) 4th										(11) 1st, (1) 2nd, (1) 4th (1) 6th										(14) TOTAL																																		
P-2 Walgreens																						(1) 1st, (2) 2nd, (1) 3rd, (4) TOTAL										(1) 6th										(1) 1st, (5) 2nd, (1) 3rd, (1) 4th, (3) 5th, (1) 6th										(12) TOTAL																																		
P-3 Grene's Field (Underground)																						(1) 1st, (1) 2nd, (1) 5th, (1) 6th, (3) 7th, (7) TOTAL										(1) 7th										(1) 1st, (1) 2nd, (1) 5th, (1) 6th, (4) 7th										(8) TOTAL																																		
P-4 Chestnut St Parking Lot																						(2) 2nd, (1) 3rd, (1) 4th, (4) TOTAL										(1) 3rd										(4) 1st, (3) 2nd, (7) 3rd, (2) 4th										(16) TOTAL																																		
P-5 Dedham Ave Parking Lot																						(1) 1st, (1) 2nd, (2) TOTAL										(1) 5th										(1) 1st, (4) 2nd, (1) 3rd, (3) 4th, (1) 5th, (2) 6th										(12) TOTAL																																		
P-6 Hospital Parking Lot																						(1) 1st										(1) 2nd										(1) 1st, (3) 2nd, (2) 3rd, (2) 4th, (1) 6th,										(9) TOTAL																																		
P-7 Needham Junction Station																						(1) 3rd										(1) 1st										(2) 1st, (2) 2nd, (2) 3rd, (1) 5th, (2) 7th										(9) TOTAL																																		
6	The town should encourage housing in the development of all three districts.	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	4	-	-	-	7	7	2	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	11	12	3	-	1	23	3																																																						
7	The town should encourage or provide landscape treatment along street frontage in the Highland Avenue and Chestnut Street Business Districts.	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3	-	-	-	13	3	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	19	7	-	-	1	26	-																																																							

Questionnaire Tabulation Summary

Community Workshop #2 (06/25/07) Prepared on 07/11/07, Revised 07/12/07 (5 Questionnaires added)
Needham Downtown Study

		Property Owners # of Questionnaires 2					Business Owners # of Questionnaires 0					Residents Near 3 Districts # of Questionnaires 7					Residents at Large # of Questionnaires 17					Not Identified # of Questionnaires 1					TOTAL # of Questionnaires 27						
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer	All Agree	All Disagree
Center Business District																																	
8a	The current height limit of buildings is 35 feet (2 1/2 stories). The height limit of buildings should be increased to 37	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	2	-	-	7	7	1	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	8	14	3	-	2	22	3
8b	The height limit of buildings should be increased to 48 feet (4 stories) if the top floor is set back or sloped from the edge of the building.	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	2	2	-	2	7	4	2	2	-	1	-	-	-	3	12	6	4	2	15	10
9	The district should be redeveloped to give greater pedestrian safety and convenience special importance.	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	1	-	-	-	11	4	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	19	6	1	-	1	25	1
10	Buildings in the Center Business District are required to be set back 50 feet from abutting residential district boundaries. The town should consider reducing the 50 foot setback if this will make redevelopment more likely and if appropriate conditions protecting abutting residents are imposed	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	2	2	-	4	7	4	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	5	11	7	3	1	16	10
Chestnut St Business District																																	
11a	The current height limit of buildings is 35 feet (2 1/2 stories). The height limit of buildings should be increased to 40	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	1	1	-	4	8	2	1	2	-	-	1	-	-	8	10	4	2	3	18	6
11b	The height limit of buildings should be increased to 48 feet (4 stories) if the top floor is set back or sloped from the edge of the building.	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	1	1	-	7	5	2	2	1	-	-	1	-	-	9	9	4	3	2	18	7
12	The town should support significant expansion of Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	-	-	1	4	8	3	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	7	12	4	-	4	19	4
13	The town should facilitate the development of medical office buildings in the vicinity of the hospital.	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	6	-	-	-	5	8	3	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	7	15	3	-	2	22	3
14	The district should be redeveloped to give greater pedestrian safety and convenience special importance.	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	4	3	-	-	-	10	3	3	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	15	7	3	-	2	22	3
15	Buildings in the Chestnut Street Business District are required to be set back 50 feet from abutting residential district boundaries. The town should consider reducing the 50 foot setback if this will make redevelopment more likely and if appropriate conditions protecting abutting residents are imposed.	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	2	-	1	8	4	2	2	-	1	-	-	-	3	10	7	4	3	13	11
Highland Ave Business District																																	
16	The current height limit of buildings is 40 feet (3 stories). Building height limit should be retained.	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3	-	-	-	1	12	4	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	7	16	4	-	-	23	4
17	The district should be redeveloped to give greater pedestrian safety and convenience special importance	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3	-	-	-	9	5	2	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	15	8	3	-	1	23	3
18	18. Buildings in the Highland Avenue Business District are required to be set back 50 feet from abutting residential district boundaries. The town should consider reducing the 50 foot setback if this will make redevelopment more likely and if appropriate conditions protecting abutting residents are imposed.	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	3	1	-	2	7	4	2	2	-	1	-	-	-	4	10	8	3	2	14	11

Small Group Discussion - Flip Chart Synopsis

Community Workshop #2 (06/25/07)
Needham Downtown Study

Small Group #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Questions:							
A URBAN DESIGN: HEIGHT AND MASSING (All Groups) • Additional height and density will enable development in the Center District that creates a more vibrant and active downtown and provides greater revenue for the Town.							
A-1 <i>Do you agree additional height, with attention to massing and edge, will improve the visual experience and enhance the traditional village environment?</i>	Loosing air & light on both sides might feel corridor-like. Get more people there - height good. Streets already claustrophobic.	4 stories too high, 3+1 max limit Want strong design standards; Prefer staggered heights if possible; Don't want all looking the same (height or design)	Encourage loosening of height restrictions Height is not concern if architecture and greening is well done Concerned about losing sense of NE town by going up too high	Concerns: canyonization / openness, light, skyline, sidewalks, transition to residential, shadows Design important New streetscape important Like Height but not 3 1/2 - too much.	Upt to 3 stories, not 4 No flat roofs Tie height to sidewalk improvements and design controls. No continuous street wall. Want courtyards, etc.	Generally agree with concept would create more 'buzz', vibrant downtown With wider sidewalk to offset verticality & a canopy of street trees.	Yes, overall. Additional height would create a better mixed-use & attract more diverse people Town Hall ought not restrict height Sun concerns (melting snow, etc.)
A-2 <i>Do you agree that change in terms of height and urban design will make a better downtown? •Are there certain amenities and design elements that pertain to housing that additionally should be considered?</i>	No boxy buildings - make them appealing Too high near residential --> 2 1/2 stories?	Yes	Use landscape to maintain village environment Needham needs growth Encourage more walking			See above.	OK if balanced overall design Improved streetscape. Streetscape matters more than height Diverse & interesting roof
B LAND USE: UPPER STORY HOUSING AND OFFICE (All Groups) • There appears to be some demand for market rate housing and additional demand for affordable housing. • The Beth Israel Deaconess is planning a major expansion of its facility along Chestnuts St which could encourage more private office space development.							
B-1 <i>If in order to get housing and office development in the Center District, a total of four stories is required, is it a trade-off you are willing to make?</i>	No Big Box unless pretty. Depends on what's inside. If sidewalks were widened.	No. Would overshadow Town Hall Like idea of housing not over retail but "side by side"	No sure if there is demand for market rate housing in Center Should keep 2 1/2 zoning in Center Town needs to make statement about growth, mixed use, vibrancy, etc.	Location very important. Not everywhere.	OK if viable	Generally desirable. Add to vibrant downtown. Affordable housing opportunity. Perfect for Smart Growth	Overall yes
B-2 <i>If in order to get housing and office development in the Chestnut St District, a total of 4 stories is required, is it a trade-off you are willing to make •Are there certain amenities and design elements that pertain to housing that additionally should be considered?</i>	Absolutely Destination retail Curbcut & sidewalk improvements Solid wall anywhere bad. Parking in back, not front. Wider sidewalks, landscaping, spaces between buildings (parks, access to parking)	Yes		Design is the key issue. Medical use -worried about lots of parking and traffic.	No consensus on location Get commuter rail parking out of downtown.	See above.	Generally yes

Small Group Discussion - Flip Chart Synopsis

Community Workshop #2 (06/25/07)
Needham Downtown Study

Small Group #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Questions:							
PARKING STRUCTURE (All Groups) C • The current on-site parking requirement tends to limit further development in the Center and Chestnut Street Districts. • Development potential in these districts will be greatly aided if structured parking is allowed.							
C-1 Assuming such structured parking does not entail some form of town funding, do you agree?	If above ground should be "invisible" / architecturally desirable.	Yes, but maybe smaller lots in each district rather than large lot or structure. Would prefer a parking structure that doesn't front on street.	Study impact of shared parking			Structured parking is desirable, necessary incentive for development if offsets zoning & for encouraging more downtown intensity (visits). Ideally would also be mixed use, retail on ground floor or	1/2 No, 1/2 Yes
C-2 If such structured parking does entail some form of town funding, would you still agree?	Depends on how much	Yes, but ...					1/2 No, 1/2 Yes
C-3 In which of the seven proposed locations might a structured parking garage be located which best meets the following requirements? (a) Is the most useful for revitalizing the downtown (b) Does not cause serious traffic congestion (c) Has the best chance of public acceptance	P2-employees P4-Largest, hidden P6-Medical future P5-Remote but good for redevelopment P1-E - Egress Issue, invisible	P-1 1st choice. Want something creative - over tracks maybe P-6 Medical use lot P-5 Retail	P-1, P-3 and P-6 top choices	1. Underground 2. Greene's Field 3. Walgreens P1 - 3			0 Walgreens 3 Underground P-4 - No P-5 - 1 P-6 - 0 P-7 - 1
D LAND USE: FIRST FLOOR RETAIL (Groups 1, 4 & 7) • Our market study shows that there is significant regional demand for retail.							
D-1 Do you favor discouraging national chains irrespective of the size of their format?	No			Downtown not conducive to chains			Yes -1 The rest said why would we discourage their interest in development?
D-2 If not, do you favor limiting the ground floor footprint of national chains in one or more of the following districts? (a) Center Business (b) Chestnut Street Business (c) Highland Avenue Business	a) 10,000 SF by right, higher by special permit b) 15,000 - 20,000 SF by right, NOT @ Garden St section c)Between a) and b)			Large retail: Downtown - no Chestnut - split			Yes
D-3 Do you favor limiting the ground floor footprint of other commercial enterprises irrespective of whether they are national chains?							Yes
D-4 If so, do you favor limiting the footprint of such ground floor commercial enterprises in one or more of the following districts? (a) Center Business (b) Chestnut Street Business (c) Highland Avenue Business							Yes
E TRAFFIC (Groups 2 & 5) • Increased height and density in the downtown districts will bring more traffic. • Improvements at intersections are one key to mitigating the increased volume							
E-1 Do you think that redirection of through-traffic to routes outside the downtown area will help or hurt revitalization?		People already do that and hurts retail			Hurt mostly.		
E-2 To improve the pedestrian environment in downtown districts, do you think the traffic should be slowed through the use of tools such as raised intersections, corner bump outs, etc.? If so, in which locations might such tools prove most effective?		No raised intersections, prefer change in texture Improve pedestrian safety Signals need to be upgraded What about left turn from Chapel onto Great Plain? Need crosswalks on Chapel & Highland near Town Hall			Redirection of some is ok Possibly, some types are problems. Not good for cyclists.		

Small Group Discussion - Flip Chart Synopsis

Community Workshop #2 (06/25/07)
Needham Downtown Study

Small Group #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Questions:							
F STREETSCAPE and PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT (Groups 3 & 6) • Physical improvements and municipal actions that improve the downtown streetscape are important incentives for Needham’s revitalization program.							
F-1 <i>Do you agree that streetscape improvements and municipal actions affecting the streetscape are important incentives to encourage property owners’ and merchants’ participation in Needham’s downtown revitalization program?</i>			More trees - less curb cuts			Streetscape critical to downtown revitalization	
F-2 <i>From an incentivizing point of view, what are the most important streetscape-related improvements or actions the town should consider?</i>						Shorter cross walks Wider sidewalks Canopy of street trees Outdoor seating Pedestrian connections & linking various town zones	
F-3 <i>Do you think the Town’s investment in streetscape improvements should be linked to complimentary private sector investment?</i>							